

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----127458 061946Z /47

R 061813Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6466
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 04038

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV BQG
SUBJECT: UK REQUEST THAT ALLIES MAKE HIGH-LEVEL
DEMARCHE TO SOVIETS TO SECURE HESS' RELEASE

REFS: (A) 77 STATE 76344 (EXDIS)

1. THE UK BONN GROUP REP (EYERS) HAS INFORMED THE US AND FRENCH REPS OF A REQUEST BY HMG THAT THE US AND FRENCH AUTHORITIES CONSIDER JOINING THE UK IN A FRESH APPROACH TO THE SOVIETS TO REQUEST THE RELEASE OF RUDOLF HESS. THE BRITISH REQUEST WAS DISCUSSED IN TRIPARTITE MEETINGS ON FEBRUARY 13 AND MARCH 3.

2. EYERS SAID THE FCO, IN INSTRUCTING THE UK EMBASSY TO TABLE THE REQUEST, HAD NOTED THAT NEARLY A YEAR HAD GONE BY SINCE THE LAST ALLIED DEMARCHE, A LONG TIME IN VIEW OF HESS' AGE. THERE WAS CONTINUOUS PUBLIC AND PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURE IN THE UK FOR HESS' RELEASE, AND BRITISH MINISTERS SHARED THE PUBLIC CONCERN, WHICH HAD INCREASED
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OVER THE PAST YEAR AS HESS HAD GROWN OLDER. HMG HAD UNDERTAKEN TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE ON THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES AND INTENDED TO HONOR THIS COMMITMENT. IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING ALLIED COHESION, THE UK WOULD PREFER TO ACT TOGETHER WITH THE ALLIES IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.

3. EYERS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR OBTAINING SOVIET AGREEMENT TO RELEASE HESS WERE SLIM. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS DOUBTFUL THAT BREZHNEV WOULD BE MUCH LONGER ON THE SCENE, AND THIS WOULD NOT BE THE FIRST TIME IN CONNECTION WITH A CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE USSR THAT THE SOVIETS HAD BEEN PREPARED TO SETTLE SOME OF THE EXISTING PROBLEMS. IF THE ALLIES MADE A DEMARCHE IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THEY WOULD SHOW THAT THEY WERE KEEPING THE ISSUE OPEN; THEY COULD REPEAT THE DEMARCHE WHEN THE MOMENT MIGHT BE MORE PROPITIOUS.

4. EYERS SAID THE FCO HAD NO FIXED IDEAS AS TO THE LEVEL OR FORM OF DEMARCHES AND WOULD WELCOME ALLIED VIEWS ON THAT SUBJECT, AS WELL AS ON TIMING. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE DEMARCHES BE MADE IN CAPITALS AND THAT THE LEVEL BE SUFFICIENTLY HIGH (E.G., DEPUTY SECRETARY LEVEL) TO SHOW THE SOVIETS THAT WE TOOK THE MATTER SERIOUSLY. IF THE US AND FRANCE ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL BUT WISHED TO SUGGEST DEMARCHES AT A LOWER LEVEL, HE WOULD OF COURSE REPORT SUCH SUGGESTIONS TO LONDON.

5. COMMENT: WHILE PARLIAMENTARY AND PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE HESS CASE IS FAR GREATER IN THE UK THAN IN THE US, IT IS USEFUL IN TERMS OF ANSWERING THE APPEALS WHICH OCCASIONALLY COME TO HIGH LEVEL US OFFICIALS TO BE ABLE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 04038

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TO STATE THAT WE ARE CONTINUING OUR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN SOVIET AGREEMENT TO THE RELEASE OF HESS ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS. THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TO DATE, INCLUDING THE PROMPT TURNDOWN BY GROMYKO WHEN THE SECRETARY LAST RAISED THE ISSUE WITH HIM IN MOSCOW (REFTEL), MAKES IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE SOVIET RESPONSE TO A FRESH DEMARCHE WOULD BE ANY MORE FORTH-COMING. THE POSSIBILITY OF A POSITIVE SOVIET REACTION CANNOT BE EXCLUDED, HOWEVER, AND FOR THIS REASON AS WELL AS FOR THE FACT THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE US TO BE SEEN AS DOING WHAT IT CAN TO SECURE HESS' RELEASE, WE RECOMMEND THAT WE BE AUTHORIZED TO INFORM THE BRITISH AND FRENCH BONN GROUP REPS OF US AGREEMENT TO THE BRITISH REQUEST.

6. THE LEVEL AT WHICH WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO MAKE A NEW DEMARCHE WOULD PRESUMABLY BE DETERMINED BY THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH WE WISH THE SOVIETS TO VIEW THE REQUEST. THE BRITISH WOULD NO DOUBT WELCOME ANOTHER DEMARCHE BY THE SECRETARY, ALTHOUGH EYERS' SUGGESTION OF DEPUTY SECRETARY LEVEL PROBABLY REFLECTS HIS ASSUMPTION
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THAT THE NEW UK REQUEST ORIGINATED WITH FCO MINISTER OF STATE JUDD, WHO HAS TAKEN A STRONG PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE HESS CASE AND WOULD PROBABLY BE PREPARED TO APPROACH THE SOVIETS AGAIN. A DEMARCHE AT ASSISTANT SECRETARY LEVEL WOULD BE TAKEN LESS SERIOUSLY BY THE SOVIETS BUT WOULD STILL SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH THE UK AND WOULD MAINTAIN OUR RECORD ON THE MATTER.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDING TO THE UK REQUEST ALONG WITH AN INDICATION -- IF THE US IS PREPARED TO MAKE A FRESH DEMARCHE -- OF THE DEPARTMENT'S PREFERENCES AS TO LEVEL, PLACE, AND TIMING.
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